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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, June 3, 2011, at 10:30 a.m.

House of Representatives

THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 2, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LYNN A. WESTMORELAND to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

PRESIDENT'S DEBT CEILING REQUEST FAILS

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday night, the people's House spoke loud and clear: No debt limit increase without real spending cuts to promote job growth. Liberals wanted to increase the debt limit by \$2.4 trillion with no meaningful reforms. At a time when the Federal Government is borrowing 42 cents of every dollar it spends, the last thing Americans want to do is raise the government's borrowing limit recklessly killing jobs. Liberals in Congress need to attach real cuts to any increases they are seeking. That means for every dollar proposed to increase the debt limit, there should be one dollar in cuts. It makes sense.

Tuesday night's vote of 318-97-7 shows that the House is overwhelmingly in agreement with this debt limit increase being denied. Over 80 Democrats joined with the 237 Republicans to vote against the President's debt ceiling request. Adding more debt to our economy handicaps small business job creation and aggravates our country's debt crisis even further. This is a direct risk to senior citizens with the value of the dollar being put at risk. It's a threat to students who could be faced with overwhelming debt in the future.

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11th in the global war on terrorism.

MINE SAFETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, a little more than a year ago, 29 coal miners lost their lives in the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia. Our Nation watched with sadness as a small community felt the lash of the worst coal mining tragedy in this country in four decades.

Shortly after the tragedy, our Nation promised these families to get to the bottom of what happened and we promised to make sure that something like this would never happen again.

The good news is that we learned a lot about what caused this tragedy in the last year. Last month, an independent panel of experts appointed by the Governor of West Virginia released the results of a 13-month-long investigation. They concluded that the explosion was preventable. The panel said that the warning signs about dangerous conditions in the mine were ignored leading up to the tragedy. They found that the Massey Energy Company ignored basic safety precautions that the mining industry has recognized for more than a century. Repeated violations had become business as usual, something which the investigation called "a normalization of deviance," where unsafe behavior and conditions became normal at Upper Big Branch mine.

The report lays out how this tragedy unfolded. It may have ended with a sudden explosion, but it was a slow-motion disaster.

The company's inadequate ventilation system allowed explosive gases to build up. Workers were slogging in

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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neck-deep water that obstructed the air currents needed to ventilate methane gas. The mine's owners routinely illegally changed ventilation plans and used faulty engineering.

In the months before the explosion, miners asked Massey management 561 times to quench the explosive potential of coal dust by applying rock dust, yet Massey only took action 65 times, or 11 percent of the time they were requested to do so.

Water sprays on a mining machine were not properly maintained and failed to extinguish sparks, which allowed a fire to ignite.

Coal dust provided the fuel that allowed a localized fire to trigger a massive explosion that ripped through miles of underground tunnels where miners were working.

Finally, the report found intimidation. Miners were afraid to speak out about their safety concerns. They dared not stop coal production. Anyone who challenged management was considered a nuisance or a threat and their jobs were on the line.

These conclusions are chilling. This report makes it clear that the failure to effectively deal with a reckless operator occurred at many levels:

Our Nation's health and safety protections failed these 29 miners because of the many loopholes in the law that were exploited by the mine industry.

Regulators allowed the mine to operate in a badly engineered ventilation system and failed to force operators to use modern technology to prevent coal dust explosions.

And the mining industry failed these workers because they repeatedly refused to speak out against some of the worst actors within their industry, and have opposed legislation to curtail their misconduct.

The State investigation is also a call to action. The panel urges Congress to enact reforms to modernize mine safety technology, give regulators better tools, strengthen criminal provisions, and improve the rights of miners.

Mr. Speaker, with this report and its recommendations, Congress has been warned. We cannot abide by the status quo any longer. We cannot let Washington's pay-to-play politics paralyze legislative action once again. Congress has been warned. We cannot let mine operators game mine safety enforcement by paying lawyers instead of fixing chronic safety problems.

Congress has been warned. We cannot let miners live in fear of being fired for speaking out on behalf of their safety. Their voices save lives.

Congress has been warned. We cannot let decisions made in the boardrooms to put production over safety go unchallenged any longer.

There are responsible mining companies that operate without an avalanche of violations. There are operators who do not make deviant behavior a part of their corporate culture. We want these mine operators to join us to rework the rules that govern this industry.

In the end, though, getting mine reform done depends upon Congress. The responsibility rests squarely here. These disasters are preventable. This report is a very clear warning. We should not—we must not—wait for another tragedy before Congress owns up to its responsibility.

□ 1010

IN MEMORY OF PRIVATE FIRST CLASS WILLIAM "SETH" BLEVINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. SCHMIDT) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day for my district because today we're going to lay an American hero to rest, Private First Class William "Seth" Blevins. He was only 21.

Just before Christmas in 1989, on December 22, Steven and Trish Wagoner Blevins got the best gift of all—a beautiful, healthy little boy. They lived in rural America, Sardinia, Brown County, Ohio. They were small business owners, working hard to make a living and working harder to make sure that their children achieve the American Dream. And they did their job with Seth. You see, Seth was a wonderful young man, a young man who loved our country so much he put the cloth of his country, a uniform, on and decided to protect our freedom no matter what cost or peril it was to him.

In 2008, he graduated from Eastern High School in Brown County. He played soccer, basketball, participated in the band, and was a member of the Eastern High School chapter of the National Honor Society, clearly a winning individual. He attended Ohio University and took courses at the University of Cincinnati prior to enlisting in the Army. He was a member of the Peace Lutheran Church in Arnheim.

His parents now feel an unbearable sorrow with the loss of their wonderful son, Seth, but so does his sister, Paige Blevins, his mother's fiancé, Brandon Black, his maternal grandparents, Will and Shirley Wagoner, and all of the aunts and uncles and cousins and friends, everyone in the community.

Seth was a member of the U.S. Army, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks in Hawaii—commonly referred to as the Wolfhounds—and he loved what he did. Unfortunately, on May 23, 2011, while so many Americans were planning their celebrations for Memorial Day, he was the victim of an improvised explosive device in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, participating in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Mr. Speaker, we must never forget the bravery of our men and women in uniform that continue to serve our country and continue to serve it in harm's way. These are true American heroes—so many who have died, so many continue in the battlefield, so many that are injured. But today, I ask

this Chamber and America to recognize Seth Blevins's family and pray for them so that they can endure this heartache and find a way to overcome it.

Mr. Speaker, may Seth Blevins rest in peace, and may his family find peace.

WELCOMING PRESIDENT WALLACE LOH TO UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am a very proud alumnus of the University of Maryland. For more than a century and a half, the University of Maryland has represented the best of American ideals of public education. Now I am very proud to say that the University of Maryland tradition is in the capable hands of our new President, Dr. Wallace Loh, who was inaugurated this spring.

Wallace Loh came to the United States at the age of 15, alone, without family, with \$300 in his pocket, his parents life savings. Wallace Loh was born in Shanghai, China. His father, a diplomat, fled the Communist regime to Lima, Peru when Wallace was a very young man. He grew up in Lima until the age of 15, but it was here in this country that he pursued the education that would ultimately make him one of our most respected academic leaders.

President Loh comes to College Park from the University of Iowa, where he served as Provost and Executive Vice President. He brings to the University of Maryland more than three decades of hard work and accomplishment in higher education. His successful career as a scholar and administrator has taken him to Seattle University, the University of Washington, the University of Colorado-Boulder, Beijing University in China, and more. He also served as a top policy adviser to Governor Gary Locke, who will be our ambassador in China. Gary Locke, of course, was the Governor of Washington State. In that capacity, he led the State's effort to expand access to higher education for low- and middle-income students.

As a leading scholar in the legal field, Dr. Loh has also been elected President of the Association of American Law Schools. Wallace Loh holds a law degree from Yale University, a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, a master's from Cornell University, and a bachelor's from Grinnell College in Iowa.

I believe that the University of Maryland could not have chosen a more qualified leader to take our university into this century. Throughout his diverse career, President Loh has built a strong track record of creating academic excellence at every stop. What an extraordinary background Wallace Loh has for this increasingly integrated world, particularly as it relates to our relations with China, one of the